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Character Sketch of New Lady of the White House

Music and Language Her Hobbies.



MRS. WM. H. TAFT.

CHICAGO, November 3.—“The first lady of the land—what manner of woman is she?” This, the all-absorbing question in the feminine mind—and in the masculine, too, for that matter—is readily answered. Mrs. Helen Herron Taft, wife of the President-elect and the next mistress of the White House, has been for years a well-known figure in Washington society, where her graciousness, intellect and womanly ways have won her a warm place in the hearts of those who have met her.

The characteristic of the Taft home lies in its atmosphere of hospitality to friend and stranger alike. Mrs. Taft is of the genuine type of American woman. She has no fads; she has not a trace of affectation; she possesses a refreshing sense of humor; she has a wealth of information on subjects running the gamut from politics to art; her manner is frank and direct; she radiates graciousness.

In these qualities of temperament the next mistress of the White House is remarkably like her husband, whose genial smile has been pictured from one end of the land to the other during the campaign. Both the next President and his wife like to welcome visitors at their home. Close friends are made to feel that the Taft hearthstone is their own, business callers receive the utmost courtesy; no one ever leaves the Taft home feeling that he has been an intruder.

In appearance Mrs. Taft is tall and youthfully slender. Her hair is dark brown and her eyes are blue gray. Serenity lies in her expression, and she has a way of smiling when she is amused which makes her face a charming picture. It has often been said that Mrs. Taft has as keen a sense of humor as her husband and that her flashes of wit often set her husband off into explosions of laughter.

Reading and music are Mrs. Taft's pet diversions. She devotes some part of each day to the study of languages, French and Spanish being her favorites. Few mistresses of the White House have been familiar with a Continental language, which has prevented them from absorbing a familiar knowledge of that fascinating part of Washington society, the diplomatic corps. Mrs. Taft speaks several languages fluently. She reads the musical reviews from every country where music is a power, and in addition she peruses the magazines devoted to politics and the best literature of the day.

Mrs. Taft's love of music has made her something more than an amateur musician and critic. In Cincinnati, her home city, she took a conspicuous

part in musical affairs, and was at one time president of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, besides being connected with other musical organizations. Mrs. Roosevelt is fond of music and has given several notable musicales in the White House, but she is not the polished musician that Mrs. Taft is.

The children of the Taft family are a source of pride and joy to both Mrs. Taft and the President-elect. There are three children in the Taft family, Robert, who is 19 and in the sophomore year at Yale; Miss Helen, who has just turned 17, and who has elected to spend four years more at school if her parents consent, and Charles P. Taft 2d, 10 years old and named after his uncle, the millionaire editor of Cincinnati.

The career of Miss Helen is giving Mrs. Taft the most concern. The next lady of the White House believes to a certain degree in higher education, but she says that a woman who has studied earnestly makes a more useful member of society than one whose accomplishments are varied, but mostly artificial. The middle course of a good academic school and special studies afterward, she believes, meet all requirements for the vast majority of future wives and mothers. So from the study of Mrs. Taft's character and personality, it is easily seen that the country need well be proud when she assumes the title of “Leading Lady of the Land.”

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In the course of his remarks the lecturer reviewed the agricultural prospects of the country; and as an illustration told a story of a poor farmer who had died, leaving to his wife the farm heavily mortgaged. He said that the widow set to work with a will and succeeded upon one year's wheat crop in paying off the entire mortgage. When he had completed his lecture, the gentleman shook hands and greeted the members of his audience. One middle-aged man finally approached him thoughtfully and began: “I say, mister, you told a story 'bout the widow raising a mortgage on one year's crop?” “Yes, my friend, that was a true story. It happened only two years ago.” “Well, sir, could you tell me who that widow is?” She's just the kind of woman I've been looking for all the time.”

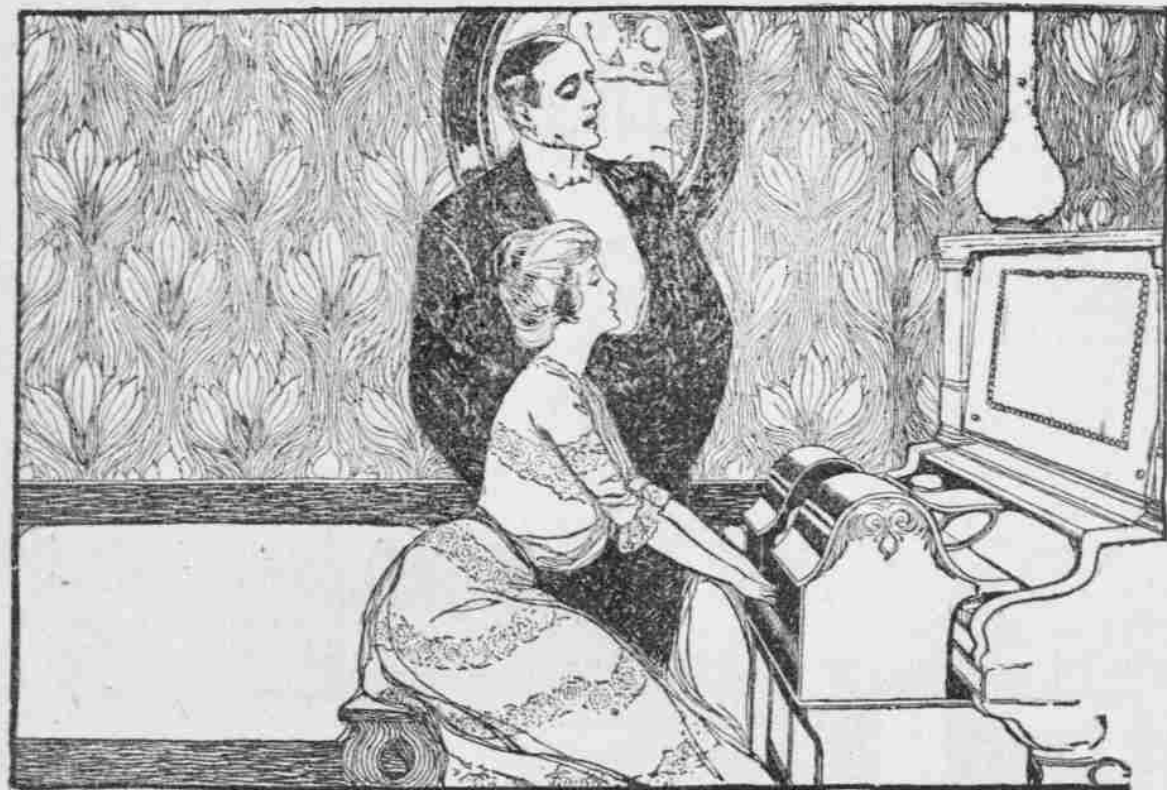
Seventy Before He Made His Fortune

McClure's.

The Vanderbilt fortune, once the greatest financial power of the United States, probably amounts, at the present moment, to not far from \$300,000,000. Of this William Kissam Vanderbilt, who controls the majority of the family properties, holds in the neighborhood of \$100,000,000, while twelve or fifteen descendants of the Commodore share among themselves the remaining \$200,000,000.

Perhaps the most remarkable fact in the whole remarkable career of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt is that he did his really important work and heaped up his enormous fortune after he was seventy years old. He was born in 1794 and almost all his energies, until the outbreak of the Civil War, had been absorbed in the management of his numerous steamboat and steamship lines.

Cornelius Vanderbilt, when running his steamboats up and down the Hudson river, had felt keenly the competition of the railroad along its eastern shore. Later developments led him to clearly perceive, what most of his contemporaries saw only faintly, that transportation in this country would follow the line, not of the canal and the river, but of the steel rail. As soon as he had caught this glimpse of the future Vanderbilt characteristically acted upon it. Fifty years before, foreseeing the possibility of steam travel by water, he had sold his whole sailing fleet and purchased steamboats. Acting just as promptly now, he sold all his water craft and began purchasing railroads.



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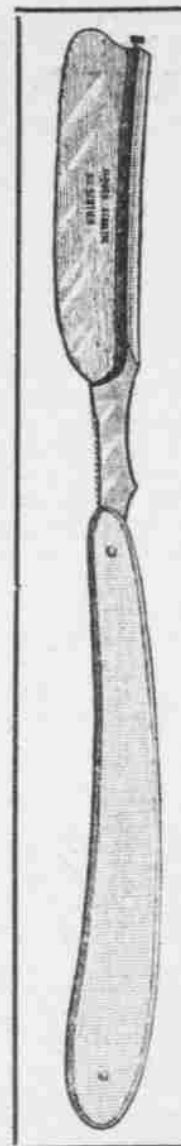
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